Editorial

Redefining educational futures through innovation, inclusion, and intelligent technologies

Redefiniendo el futuro de la educación a través de la innovación, la inclusión y las tecnologías inteligentes

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In today's rapidly changing world, education is experiencing profound upheaval. This transition is more than a reaction to technical advancement. Rather, it reflects shifting societal requirements, learners' expectations, and the desire for a more inclusive and fair system. Technology is the foundation of this development, enabling new methods of teaching, learning, and participation. However, while we welcome this evolution, it is critical to remember that successful educational innovations must be grounded on goals, ethics, and empathy. The ultimate promise of technology is not its novelty, but rather its capacity to empower students, overcome hurdles, and personalize learning experiences.

The current Cultura Educación y Sociedad issue is timely and vital. It highlights scholarly works intended to demonstrate the linkages between education, innovation, and technology. Each article provides original research on the challenges and opportunities of educational institutions attempting to adapt to an increasingly digitalizing environment. Various studies on this topic reveal the complexities of education today. It addresses everything from artificial intelligence and data-driven decision-making to inclusive teaching approaches and critical thinking in rural communities.

First, the article by Velásquez-De Los Ros and Parra-Bernal's research focuses on the critical role of the learning community in encouraging critical thinking in the context of the "new rural areas". Their work synthesized 76 findings, showing that the communal learning spaces of rural schools are fertile grounds for the development of analytical and reflective skills of students. The study also addresses the social and cultural dimensions of learning and the influence of environments, communities, and lived experiences on students' perceptions and processes of problems. This demonstrates the importance of adapting educational strategies to the specific contexts of learners.

For his part, Tello-Zuluaga and Uribe-Zapata conducted a thorough review of measures used to assess teacher attitudes toward inclusive education. Despite increased support

for inclusiveness, the study finds little consensus on how to appropriately analyse these sentiments. The authors point out that instruments differ greatly in structure, scope, and cultural relevance, complicating efforts to compare findings across contexts.

Interestingly, Sánchez-Arévalo, Ferro- Escobar and Chaparro- Sierra turn their focus to one of the most pressing issues in higher education today - student dropouts. By applying the Tinto Dropout Model and analysing multi-year data through ANOVA, their study identifies individual and systemic factors contributing to attrition. Particularly insightful is the exploration of how pedagogical approaches, such as Problem-Based Learning, can counter disengagement and promote student retention. Their findings point to the need for proactive, data-informed strategies that address dropouts' academic, emotional, and institutional dimensions.

Méndez-Mercado and Flórez-Ricardo's research on the language of assessment in science education raises important questions about how we evaluate what students know and how they express that knowledge. Their qualitative analysis of exam booklets and focus group discussions reveals inconsistencies in question phrasing that could bias assessment outcomes. The study advocates for improved teacher training in assessment design and proposes using AI to support the creation of clearer, more inclusive test items. In doing so, the authors challenge educators to think critically about the fairness and effectiveness of their evaluation practices.

In another contribution, Hernández-Quirama and Rojas-Betancur examine how undergraduates perceive research training. Their findings encourage students to generally recognise the importance of research in their professional formation. However, they also identify gaps, particularly in infrastructure and institutional support. This paper echoes a broader call for universities to cultivate a culture that values and supports inquiry at all levels rather than merely focusing on teaching the research skills.

The journal issue also features the article by Botello-Plata, Choles-Almazo and Pomarico-Pimienta to determine the effectiveness and impact of artificial intelligence as a pedagogical-administrative resource in promoting generic competencies through Personalized Learning Environments adapted to the multicultural context under study. The authors conclude that artificial intelligence is practical as a pedagogical-administrative tool when applied with an ethical, reflective and culturally relevant approach. It is recommended to avoid its indiscriminate use and promote human interaction, thus ensuring comprehensive learning adapted to multicultural contexts.

Likewise, based on the contributions of technology to educational processes, authors Gómez-Cano, Sánchez-Castillo, and Pérez-Gamboa present a bibliometric analysis that delves into the main strengths and limitations associated with the mediation of technology in higher education in accordance with the comprehensive education declared in the curricula. The authors focus the discussion on how scientific literature has been supporting a state of the art related to the theoretical and empirical implications of the topic studied to identify the main variables that should be used as a reference for the advancement of knowledge in the categories.

In a complementary thematic line, the manuscript by Isaza-Valencia, Estrada-Jaramillo, Molina-Saldarriaga and Jaramillo Acero is shared, whose objective is oriented to describe the moral development of a group of psychology and law students at a higher

education institution in Medellín, Colombia. The researchers argue that the moral development levels of the evaluated students are predominantly low or moderately low, underscoring the need to design, implement, and assess educational strategies that effectively address and enhance this aspect of professional training.

The authors Pérez-Montero and Hernández-Henríquez evaluate how the use of ChatGPT impacts the formulation of research proposals at the university level. Among its main contributions is the argument that the articulation between ChatGPT and pedagogical mediation strengthens research skills. This is how this artificial intelligence, framed within didactic strategies, is presented as an invaluable instrument in the teaching-learning-evaluation processes at the university level, while promoting these processes in a critical and autonomous way.

Finally, authors Avendaño-Fernandez, Roa-Martín and Leal-Ramírez present an article that demonstrates the significant importance of integrating digital education, active learning, and critical and computational thinking. The research argues that in project-based learning and active learning, it has been validated that developing programming activities in real-life applications allows for appropriate concepts, skills, and soft competences. The analysis identified weaknesses in some concepts, deficiencies in operationalization, and the need to complement them experimentally, allowing for adjusting curricular contents and demonstrating the application of learning models and methodologies.

Collectively, these ten articles have provided a multidimensional perspective on the evolving educational landscape. They emphasise the relationship between technology, educational contexts, and human actions. We are left with a shared recognition that technology is not the silver bullet to revamp education. The thoughtful and deliberate application of technology with inclusive values and a core commitment to pedagogical integrity can create genuine change.

As we move forward, educational innovation must remain grounded in social purpose. Artificial intelligence, personalised learning systems, and data analytics are powerful tools, but their true value lies in how they are used to enhance human connection, promote equity, and support lifelong learning. The future of education must not only be smart but also compassionate and inclusive.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the contributors to this volume for their scholarly rigour and insightful perspectives. We also commend the editorial team Cultura Educación y Sociedad, for curating a volume that vividly captures the spirit of transformation. It is our hope that readers will find this issue both intellectually stimulating and practically relevant, and that it serves as a source of inspiration for ongoing dialogue, research, and innovation in education.

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